

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	23rd September 2009
Issue Date:	7th October 2009
Scheme Location:	MOD St Athan
Scheme Description:	Defence Training Academy
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

As part of the process of ongoing engagement between DCFW and Metrix, it was agreed to concentrate in this review on the main gate area and the REME [Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] museum. This area is central to the northern access road and to the site as a whole. The existing church of St Brise has recently been Grade II listed, and will be renovated [including the reconstruction of the tower] and brought into use as a community facility. The new multi -faith centre provides a physical and visual transition between this church and the DARA hangar, with the bell tower designed as a significant landmark. The Gurkha temple is a smaller, simpler building with a central roof lantern.

The REME museum, located behind the tri-service wall and display area, will accommodate a large vehicle display hall and smaller galleries with an educational area. Public access will be from the east, away from the main gate area, but there will be a strong visual connection.

The outline application was submitted in May 2009 and is about to go to committee. The specific areas under consideration here relate to future detailed applications.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel was pleased to be updated on this important project and to receive further design details of the buildings, public realm and landscape proposals. We cannot support the museum proposal as it stands, which is well short of a stage D presentation. We have

major concerns about other aspects of the main gate area and remain to be convinced that this will work as a piece of active public realm. In summary:

- The entrance space remains dominated by the demands of vehicle movement, parking, drop-off and security checking.
- While we now understand better the security constraints of the main entrance layout, we are concerned at the lack of human scale and poor connectivity between the three faith buildings.
- The design concept for the new multi-faith building is not logically followed through. In particular this affects the entrance and internal planning.
- The museum building lacks a clear concept. Its legibility and an intuitive understanding of its approach and entrance location should be conveyed in its built form.
- The museum's relationship with the curved tri-service wall, and the cut off corner to the south east, are awkward elements within the overall composition.
- An exhibition designer should be appointed as soon as possible and allowed to influence the design development.
- We would like to see a more detailed landscape treatment of the main gate area, which might be used to improve connectivity.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The team tabled additional information, a model and drawings, on top of what had been received as pre-review material.

We noted that the scale of the main entrance area remained largely unchanged and were told that this was deliberate. The scale, layout and prescribed traffic routes are largely due to the constraints imposed by security considerations and counter terrorism measures, and in particular by minimum stand off distances of 25-50 metres. Within these constraints the team have tried to create a sense of place and a fitting entrance space. Despite this the Panel thought that the relationship between all the faith buildings needed strengthening. The team insisted that despite appearances, the road layout was not a roundabout as the northern arc would be very rarely used. Also, for much of the day traffic movement would be minimal as this would not be a delivery or service entrance.

The architectural concept for the multi-faith centre was drawn from the previously tabled design guide, and develops the theme of crisp white surfaces with fully glazed slots set at right angles to these vertical planes. If this concept is to work in practice, it is important that the external treatment relates to internal spaces in a logical and coherent way. At the moment one of the large glazed slots gives on to a small choir room, rather than the main hall as one would expect. Similarly, the concept of plain white surfaces should be followed through without interruption, and the main entrance would therefore need to be relocated, possibly in one of the glazed slots. It was suggested that the landscape treatment in front of the faith buildings could reflect the radial geometry that has been created to manage the stand off distances.

In our view stated at the previous review, the importance of the REME museum building would have warranted an international design competition. However, we were told that the

architectural teams had already been appointed by the client. Exhibition designers are in the process of being appointed and we advised that this should be done urgently, as their input should be an integral part of the design process.

The design intention for the museum building is that it should relate to but not dominate the main entrance area. Consequently, it connects with and slightly overhangs the triservice wall. This relationship, however, is confusing for the arriving visitor who might expect the main entrance to be part of the large west-facing glazed wall. Instead the entrance is invisible from the road and is located on the eastern side of the building, in a counter-intuitive arrangement which leads to poor legibility. The location of the entrance should be signalled by the building form, without the necessity for signage, and this is currently not the case. If the museum cannot be accessed from the main gate area, the team should consider moving the entrance to the north facade, where it would be visible from the approach road.

We were informed that the cut off corner to the south east of the museum footprint had originally been in response to the required stand off distance from a building within the secure site. Although that building has been relocated, the chamfered corner remains and will now accommodate large openings for Heavy Equipment Transporters.

The landscape treatment to the edge of the northern access road will entail some removal of vegetation to the north of the museum. Native hedgerow species will be introduced and a long grass habitat will be established in this area. A tree survey has been carried out but reveals little of significance and some trees will be removed to make way for roads and footpaths. The south facing courtyard outside the museum will allow the public to view training activity within the DTC camp.

The review focussed upon the setting, approach to and massing of the museum. Structure and materials were not discussed and we would like an opportunity to review the detailed design in the future as these do not yet appear to be resolved to RIBA Stage D. The Panel is keen to maintain the regular dialogue with the design team and it was suggested that the scale and content of the project required a longer session in future.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.

A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:
Agent/Client/Developer

Metrix [Chris Liddle]

Pensaer/Architect:

Scott Brownrigg [John Richards,

Roger Matthews]
Capita [Karen Le Feuvre]
HLM Landscape [David Shiels]

AwdurdodCynllunio/
Planning Authority

Vale of Glamorgan

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:
Design review panel:
Ewan Jones [Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]
Jonathan Hines
Ed Colgan

Mark Hallett
Simon Carne
Howard Wainwright

Lead Panellist:

Simon Carne

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Glen Dyke [DCFW]
Maria Amparo Asenjo [DCFW]